

The New Mayor
Based on G. H. Broadhurst's Successful Play

The Man of The Hour

By ALBERT PAYSON TERRUNE.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE boss is turned down!" This startling news flew lightning fast to every quarter of the organization and in its wake spread a trail of incredulous amazement. Every member, from alderman to "heelie," knew why Horrigan had made Bennett mayor. That the latter should turn against his benefactor seemed not only black ingratitude, but something akin to insanity, for it apparently spelled political suicide for the young man.

While neither of the disputants had repeated the details of the quarrel, yet those details with many another were already passing from mouth to mouth in the mysterious fashion whereby the closest kept secrets are divulged and enlarged on. In the financial world, too, the veto came as a bombshell. Borough Street railway stock fell with a thud that shook more than one colossal fortune. Bennett—central point of the whole upheaval—was the calmest man of all who were involved. He had chosen his course, and he was following it with a dogged quiet far more dangerous than any loud mouthed bluster. He had laid out a campaign, and that campaign he rigidly followed.

His first step was to send for Perry Wainwright early in the morning following the clash with Horrigan and, under strict pledge of secrecy, to explain the whole complicated affair to that very bewildered young man.

"You're all right, Alwyn! You're all the goods!" crowed Perry in genuine admiration. "But why didn't you backhead Horrigan and throw him downstairs?"

"I think I did," said Bennett dryly. "I think I'm still doing it. That's why I sent for you today."

"Want me to lick him for you?" asked Perry in delight. "He's a bit over my weight, but I wouldn't mind putting—"

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"No," interrupted Bennett, amused at the lad's vehemence. "I want you to play the melodramatic brother and protect your sister."

"Say," snorted Perry, "all the lightness gone out of his manner and his young frame stiffening ominously. 'd'you mean to say the cur is fraiming up any game on Dallas? I'—"

"Sit down," ordered Alwyn, "and try to use what little human intelligence you may have. I've got to have your help, and what use are you when all you can think of is getting thrashed by somebody? Sit down now and listen to me."

Perry meekly obeyed the new note of command in his friend's voice, and Bennett resumed:

"Your uncle has tried to hamper me by putting all your fortune and Dallas' into Borough Street railway stock. The news of my veto will reach the exchange almost at once. That will cause a slump in Borough stock. If Horrigan fails to carry the bill through over my head—and he will fail if I can possibly block him—that will mean the practical collapse of the stock. It will mean that you and Dallas will be almost penniless."

"Well," suggested Perry cheerfully, "then you can marry Dallas, and little brother Perry can come and live with you. Don't worry, old chap. I'—"

"Shut up, you young idiot, and sit down and listen! Here's a check; also a note of introduction to my broker. He's a close mouthed fellow, and he'll keep the secret. I want you to sell Borough stock short to the amount of—"

"To speculate? Gee! I never thought—"

"I don't believe in speculation as a rule, but this time it's the only way out. Sell short. Then if the bill is defeated you and Gladys will still be as well off as you are now, even after paying me back this sum I've advanced. If the bill is passed over my head, the stock will boom, and you'll both be richer than ever. Understand the idea? I think I've arranged it so you and she won't lose a dollar in either case."

"Alwyn," cried Perry, the full idea at last penetrating his youthful brain, "you're the whitest ever. The—"

"Hold on! I do this on one condition."

"Oh!"

"On condition you promise solemnly that neither Dallas nor any one else shall know my share in it."

"But—"

"Promise!"

"Oh, well, all right, then. But Dallas ought to—"

"No, she oughtn't. Now clear out. I'm busy. Don't waste any time going to my broker. I'm holding back the official announcement of the veto as long as I can. But—"

"I'm on. So long, old chap. Enter Perry the Lamb into Bear and Bullville! Let Horrigan & Co. indulge in a timely tremble!"

Scarcely had Perry departed on his mission when Phelan was announced.

"Your honor," he shouted as he first caught a glimpse of Bennett. "You're all aces! Nothin' to it. Friend Horrigan's bitin' holes in the ceiling. He's—oh, you needn't look so mum. I'm wise. I haven't spent ten years and close on a million bucks in scrapin' together a private secret service system."



Perry Wainwright.

for nothin'. 'You've signed the bill!' squeals Horrigan. 'No, you big stiff!' says you. 'I've vetoed it. Now go chase yourself before I knock you from under your hat!' says you. Them was the very words, so I'm told."

"I congratulate you on your secret service men," laughed Bennett. "They seem to have a wonderful faculty for quoting one's remarks literally, but—"

"But did I come here to ladle out hot air to you?" supplemented Phelan. "No, I didn't. I come to tip you off to a meetin' that's held last night at Wainwright's house—him an' Horrigan an' Gibbs an' some others, includin' in 'em Williams, who's Horrigan's mouthpiece an' handy man in the board of aldermen. Didn't happen to hear of that meetin', did you?"

"No. I am unfortunate in having no secret service corps."

"Never mind," returned Phelan, on whom the satire of the reply was quite lost. "You can get the benefit of mine. Now, at this meetin' they did a lot of jabberin' an' they cussed you up hill an' down dale. Says Horrigan, 'If that young cub'—"

"Thanks," interposed Alwyn, "but I don't care to hear what was said about me. I'—"

"All right, then, but there's something you do want to hear. They got busy at last an' framed up a new word—"

for the Borough bill that'll maybe throw dust in your eyes if you ain't put on to it in advance. They've cut out the subway paragraph an' the express business clause, an' they allow transfers at all cross lines. That's the way they'll put the bill up to the aldermen next time. A nice, harmless lookin' document it'll be, an' perhaps the board 'll swallow it if'—"

"But do the alterations in the bill also eliminate the 'perpetual franchise' clause?"

"Ah, there's the point! They don't. All the other things you kicked against have been wiped out, but the 'perpetual franchise' clause stands."

"And the \$2,000,000 cash offer stands, too," added Bennett. "I still fail to see why I should present Mr. Wainwright's company with a franchise for which another man is willing to pay the city \$2,000,000, and I shall fight the bill to the very end."

"Good boy, your honor! An' Jimmy Phelan's with you. We'll make Horrigan look like—"

"He needs fourteen votes to carry the bill past my veto. He has his thirteen aldermen, under Williams' lead. But only those thirteen voted for the bill in its original state. Unless Horrigan and Williams can find a fourteenth alderman to—"

"Unless one of the men who voted against it before can be brought to vote for it next time Horrigan loses," answered Phelan. "He'll make it his business to buy a fourteenth man, an' I'll make it my business to find out who he tries to get an' to help your honor keep that same fourteenth man straight. That's how it adds up so far. Well, I'll be joggin'. I'll keep you posted, an' between us we'll make Horrigan give a livin' picture imitation of a man without a scalp before we're through with him."

"Little of Phelan's exultation was reflected in the new mayor's face as the alderman bustled out. His duty lay clear before him, and that duty he would follow. But he alone realized the cost. He had so counted on the promised talk with Dallas Wainwright the preceding evening. On the hopes of that interview he had staked his all. In it he was to have received the half pledged reward for his months of toil and achievement."

Yet in view of his present relations toward Wainwright he could not, of course, visit the financier's home. The doors of the house that contained the woman he loved had been barred to him. And Dallas—what must she have thought of his failure to call?

CHAPTER VIII.

I'VE found out who their fourteenth man is, your honor," whispered Phelan in high excitement. "It's Roberts—Richard P. Roberts of the Third. He's the alderman that Horrigan's trying to put the Indian sign on. We've got to nail him if we can."

"You're sure it's Roberts?" asked Bennett in the same undertone.

"The administration ball was in full swing. Mayor and alderman had chanced to meet for a moment in a big, crowded reception foyer just off the ballroom."

"Am I sure it's Roberts?" echoed Phelan. "Am I sure? Might as well ask me am I sure Chesty Dick Horrigan is crooked. I've got the facts down straight. Them secret service chaps of mine!"

"If they get Roberts they will be able to pass the bill!"

"They ain't goin' to get him if Jimmy Phelan's hand don't turn out to be all deuces an' trays. 'An'—"

"Keep an eye on him and don't let him go away without my knowing it. I must see him tonight and learn positively how he stands in regard to the matter. He has a reputation for being honest. If only—"

"Here's Alwyn, Mrs. Bennett," came Perry Wainwright's voice from the doorway. "In here. Say, your honor, your honorable honor's honored mother has been looking everywhere for you. And now that I've reunited the long lost mayor and his anxious mamma I'll chase off and find my partner for the next waltz. I wish it was Cynthia. Ever dance with Cynthia, Alwyn? Poetry of motion and all that. Like a swan or—a—oh, good evening, alderman. I didn't see you? Are you dancing tonight?"

"Dancin'?" repeated Phelan in high disgust. "Do I look it? It's bad enough to be harassed into this open faced suit that feels like I was goin' to slip through of it every minute, without tryin' to dance too. At a show of this kind I feel like a pair of yellow shoes at a funeral. So long, your honor. Even, Mrs. Bennett. There's the music startin', son," he added to Perry as he started for the ballroom.

"I heard it," said the lad, "but I'm in no wild hurry."

"Thought you said you had a partner to look up."

"I have—one of Judge Newman's daughters. Ever see her? I thought not or you wouldn't have wondered why I wasn't in a hurry. Better late than—"

"Are you having a good time, mother?" Bennett was asking the little old lady as he found a seat for her.

"Yes," she answered. "Aren't you?"

"Of course I am. Why do you ask?"

The foyer was thinning out as people trooped to the ballroom. For the moment mother and son were alone together.

"You aren't having a good time, Alwyn," she contradicted gently. "You're unhappy about something. Tell me."

"Nonsense!" he denied, with a forced laugh. "I'—"

"You are thinking of Dallas, my boy. Is anything wrong between you and her? What has happened?"

"Nothing," he answered sullenly. But the mother was not content. Her heart ached for the grief her son was trying to hide.

"Something has happened, Alwyn," she declared, "and I want to know what, so that I can help you. You love her. And that day she came back from Europe I felt sure she loved you. What is holding you two apart?"

"Nothing that can be helped."

"But you never go to see her or—"

"How can I? You know my attitude toward her uncle. How can I call on her while she is in his house? I exposed his relations toward the Borough Street railway franchise bill. I am fighting him and his iniquitous bill with every means in my power! Dallas lives!"

"I hadn't thought of that. You poor boy! But surely—"

"And something more. Her money and Perry's are invested in Borough stocks. By beating that bill I seem outwardly to be willfully wrecking their fortune. I told you the plan I arranged with Perry to avert this, but she doesn't know of that. And—"

"Why don't you tell her, then? Or let me tell her?"

"Because it isn't her gratitude I want. I want her to love me."

"But don't you see in the meantime what a weapon you are putting into Mr. Wainwright's hands? Suppose he tells Dallas of your enmity to him and lets her know you are seemingly trying to impoverish her and her brother? He might prejudice her terribly against—"

"I've thought of all that. I must be content to wait. Next Friday the revised Borough bill comes up before the aldermen again for the final fight. When it's settled one way or the other I can go to her and explain. Meantime—"

"Meantime she is here tonight with Mr. Wainwright. Have you seen her?"

"Only for a minute."

"Did she treat you with the same friendliness, the same interest, as of old? Don't think I'm inquisitive, dear. I only ask all these questions because I love you."

"I know," he answered, pressing her hand as it lay on his arm. "yet I can hardly answer you, for I hardly know. In her presence I am not at ease because I can't tell her everything, and she seems ill at ease because she knows there's something I don't tell her. Oh, it's a wretched position for us both!"

"Then why don't you clear it up?"

"By going to her and saying: 'Dallas, I am exposing your uncle as a blackguard and am destroying your fortune and Perry's. Will you marry me?' These are the facts; but, thank God, it's only till Friday."

"After that I can go to her and make it all clear."

Before Mrs. Bennett could reply Perry returned to the ballroom, Cynthia at his side.

"Then why not give me the next one, too?" the lad was pleading. "If one two-step's good, two two-steps are twice as good. Please!"

"But see," expostulated Cynthia, showing him her card. "The next is Mr. Gibbs. I've told you that twice."

"I wish Gibbs all the luck in the world," observed Perry benevolently, as he deposited Cynthia on a fauteuil beside her chaperon, Mrs. Bennett. "I wish him so much good luck that if he'd slip and break both his legs I'd pay for a cab to take him home."

"Look out, please!" begged Cynthia. "He's coming!"

"The next is ours, I think, Miss Garrison," said Gibbs, entering from the ballroom with Dallas on his arm. "I hope we'll have better fortune than Miss Wainwright and I. My step does not seem to suit hers tonight."

"No, I'm afraid the fault was mine," protested Dallas. "I'm a little tired. I think. May I sit here with you a few minutes, Mrs. Bennett?" she added as Gibbs bore Cynthia away for their dance.

"You don't seem very fond of Mr. Gibbs, Perry," observed Mrs. Bennett, noting young Wainwright's scowl of impotent wrath.

"Not fond enough to make me want to live in the same world with him. Mrs. Bennett, you're too pretty to be just a chaperon. Come and dance this two-step with me. Please do!"

He nodded with vast significance toward Dallas and Bennett, and the little old lady, catching the idea, accepted with alacrity.

"I'm so glad even to get this minute with you," began Alwyn when he and Dallas were alone. "It's so long since—"

"Since you came to see me? Yes, but that is your fault. Alwyn, why haven't you called since I came home?"

"Don't you know why, Dallas?"

"No."

"Are you certain you don't know?"

"I—I don't know absolutely," she faltered. "Oh, there are so many things I don't know absolutely!"

"What is one of them?"

"For one thing, you and I used to be such good friends and—"

"That is past," said Alwyn firmly. "There can be no talk of mere friendship between you and me, Dallas. I must be everything or nothing to you. Tonight I can't speak as I want to, but I can in a very few days. Trust me till then. You know I am fighting Mr. Wainwright's interests and—"

"Yes," she replied bitterly. "My uncle gives me no chance to forget that."

"Don't think I'm fighting him for my own amusement! I must oppose him or else give up a fight that I set out to win. And I mean to win it!"

"That's the same old fighting spirit I used to try so hard to awaken in you," said Dallas, a faint note of admiration in her rich voice. "I told you once it always took a blow to arouse you. That blow has evidently been struck."

"It has been struck!" he acquiesced, with a sad ghost of a smile.

She saw the haggard lines about his mouth, the tired look in his eyes, and a lump came into her throat. She leaned forward impulsively, but before she could speak he had unknowingly thrown away the golden moment by continuing:

"I must win this fight even though it affects others besides Mr. Wainwright. Even if—"

"What others do you mean?"

"Oh, I can't explain now. After Friday I can. On Saturday may I come to see you and tell you everything?"

"Why not now?"

"There are obstacles that—"

"Tell me what they are!" she begged. "I can't. All I can tell you now is that I love you. I love you above all the world, sweetheart, and—"

But fate in the dual guise of Horrigan and Wainwright intervened. The financier and the boss, seeking some quiet spot for a chat, strolled through the foyer, where Horrigan on sight of Bennett halted with a glower of dislike, which he took no pains to conceal.

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